

Washington State Patrol Media Release

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WSP Chief Appeals To Washington Drivers For Safe/Smart Holiday Driving

From January 2004 - December 2005 over 10,000 citizens were either injured or killed on Washington State highways as a result of a DUI or speed related collision. Over 2,000 (or 20%) of these collisions have been during the months of November and December. It is very disturbing that the quality of life, for our families, friends and co-workers are so impacted by motor vehicle collisions. I feel the same way about these senseless collisions and I am making a plea for each of you to help us eliminate these tragedies.

The Washington State Patrol (WSP) has identified these two issues of speed and DUI driving as top priorities for the agency. Every year when November rolls around there are a number of factors such as holiday celebrations and weather which can contribute to the large amount of collisions on our highways. Because of this, I am asking you to sit down and take a few minutes to think about your own driving habits and how you can ensure that you and your loved ones will have a safe holiday season now and continue safely into the next year.

In order to achieve our goal of zero traffic deaths, we need your help! Stricter laws and enforcement can only go so far to get dangerous drivers off the road, we need your assistance in order to successfully enforce and educate everyone out there. Below are a few things that you can do to assist us:

- If you or one of your friends/family members have been drinking, don't drive, use a designated driver; call a friend, a taxi or a tow truck to get home. While this may be inconvenient, it could save a life.
- Think and plan ahead, allow yourself enough time to get where you need to go so you don't need to speed to get there.
- Take your time and slow down, especially if the driving conditions warrant it and be sure to wear your seat belt.
- Be prepared for winter driving conditions: keep an emergency kit in your car with extra blankets and food and be sure to allow enough distance between you and the vehicle in front of you.
- If you are on the road and come across someone who you suspect might be under the influence, or is dangerously driving, immediately call 9-1-1 and report it (if it is safe for you to do so). If an officer is in the area, they will be able to stop the car before it has the chance to cause harm to someone else.

The WSP has dedicated itself to public safety, and throughout this holiday season, the men and women of the State Patrol and other law enforcement agencies will be working around the clock to ensure safety on our roadways. We will continue to zero in on patterns throughout the state to find where the most problems are occurring, and partner with other local law enforcement agencies in those areas in order to enforce and educate those drivers on the dangers of speed as well as drinking and driving. Our goal is to get dangerous drivers off the road, and we will work hard to accomplish that goal.

Please do your part this holiday season in helping us with this effort. Remember that taking a few extra minutes to slow down or demand that someone who has been drinking not drive can mean the difference between life and death.

For more information on safe driving, please go to our Web site:
www.wsp.wa.gov/traveler/traveler.htm .

Thank you, happy holidays and safe driving to all.

Chief John R. Batiste